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Happy New Year from **MassMobility**! The January 2018 issue covers news about community transportation, human service transportation coordination, and mobility management in Massachusetts. Read on to learn about the multi-award winning Stoneham Transportation Advocacy Committee, proposed liability legislation for volunteer driver programs, vehicle donation for veterans in Peabody, and more.

We are also excited to announce that registration for the 2018 conference is open! This year, the annual Massachusetts Community Transportation Coordination Conference is merging with MassDOT's Innovation and Mobility Exchange. See below for details.

This newsletter is compiled by **MassMobility**, an initiative of the [Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services](#), with support from [MassDOT](#).

Conference registration is open!

In order to better integrate mobility management with other transportation initiatives, the 2018 Massachusetts Community Transportation Coordination Conference will be held in conjunction with the Innovation and Mobility Exchange, scheduled for April 10 and 11 from 7:30am to 4:00pm at the DCU Center in Worcester. On the second day - April 11 - an entire track will be devoted to mobility management, with panels and breakout sessions on topics relevant to improving mobility and access for seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income commuters in Massachusetts. Attendees will also have access to many general conference sessions on emerging technologies and other innovations.

Conference registration is now open! Visit [massdotinnovation.com](#) for more information or to [register](#). If you or your agency cannot pay the registration fee, apply for the [Community Mobility Scholarship](#) that MassDOT is offering this year. Scholarship applicants should apply as soon as possible; the last day to apply will be March 6. All applicants will be notified by March 16 if they have been awarded the scholarship.

Statewide planning association honors Stoneham Transportation Advocacy Committee with two awards

On December 8, the Massachusetts chapter of the American Planning Association honored the [Stoneham Transportation Advocacy Committee](#) (STAC) at its annual [awards ceremony](#). Nominated for one award, STAC received two: one for Social Advocacy, and another for Citizen Planning.

A committee of the nonprofit Stoneham Community Development Corporation, STAC offers residents and local officials the opportunity to work together to advance local mobility. STAC first formed three years ago as an ad hoc group to support transportation-related recommendations from a strategic plan for Stoneham Square. Since then, STAC has partnered with town leaders to effect an impressive amount of change in a short time. Accomplishments include extending operating hours of the MBTA Route 132 bus, supporting a [Complete Streets](#) policy, winning a grant for a Complete Streets design for Stoneham Square, supporting a regional [North Suburban Mobility Study](#), completing a zip code study with [MassRIDES](#) to analyze commuting patterns, and supporting the Council on Aging's successful effort to add a new accessible van to their fleet through the [Community Transit Grant Program](#).

On average, 10 to 12 people attend on any given month, often including residents, MBTA riders, local elected leaders, professional municipal staff, and regional and state leaders such as the MBTA, MassRIDES, and State Representative Michael Day. These meetings have created a space where underserved groups can discuss their needs with town leaders. For example, STAC meetings have provided opportunities for the Council on Aging to bring local seniors' transportation challenges to the attention of town decision-makers.

STAC Chair Rachel Meredith-Warren attributes STAC's success in part to deliberate choices the group made about its meetings. Meetings are held once a month at a consistent time and location: early in the morning to accommodate town staff who attend on work hours as well as residents who attend before work, and hosted by the Senior Center to encourage participation from local seniors. Meredith-Warren plans agendas that will move the group forward without being too strict: "You'll be more effective if you're having fun," she explains.

Having spent its first three years supporting the recommendations of the 2015 Strategic Plan, STAC will now move on to helping implement recommendations from this year's [North Suburban Mobility Study](#).

Barre Council on Aging Chairman partners with legislators on liability concerns

In 2009, the Barre Council on Aging (COA) started a volunteer driver program to provide rides for seniors to medical appointments, the grocery store, and other destinations. The program was effective, but, ultimately, town officials grew wary of liability and disbanded the program. Around the same time, Barre COA Chairman Richard Whippee suggested that Dunkin Donuts refused to donate leftover pastries to the Senior Center for the same reason - liability. Whippee thought of the [Good Samaritan Act](#), a piece of legislation that prevents legal consequence for a person acting in "good faith" to assist a victim of a crime, and wondered if it could be applied to volunteer drivers.

Seeking a legislative remedy, Whippee met with Donna Farmer, Chief of Staff to Representative Donald R. Berthiaume, and

advocated for an expansion of the Good Samaritan law, citing the lack of transportation in Worcester County and the previous success of the volunteer driver program. Rep. Berthiaume filed [House Bill 3025](#), which would expand the scope of the Good Samaritan law to include volunteer drivers. The bill was co-sponsored by state Senator Anne M. Gobi, who filed a similar bill in the Senate - [Senate Bill 868](#). The proposed pieces of legislation currently sit in the Joint Committee on the Judiciary.

Whippee shared that he remains hopeful the bill will make it out of committee with a favorable report before the deadline of February 7. "Recommended transportation solutions generally require substantial funds," Whippee says. "But this bill won't cost the state anything - yet will satisfy a drastic need and improve the lives and mobility of seniors."

Honda North donates vehicle to Peabody veterans

[Honda North](#), a Danvers-based dealership, donated a new Honda Odyssey to the City of [Peabody's Veterans Services Department](#) (VSD). The vehicle will be used to provide medical rides for Peabody-based veterans, helping to ease their transportation burden.

Veterans' Service Officer Steve Patten, who began his position at the VSD a little over a year ago, shared that he, VSD Secretary Lisa Leavitt, and volunteer driver Ken Hopkins were using their personal vehicles to drive local veterans to and from medical appointments. "There's a large population of aging veterans in Peabody who were calling us for rides," Patten shares. "With no support system, many were paying for private transportation to medical appointments. For an [older adult] on a fixed income, that's a lot going to medical expenses." They determined that medical transportation for veterans was a large unmet need, and began formulating ways to fill this gap.

Leavitt was inspired by the neighboring City of Salem, which has a vehicle dedicated to veterans' transportation. Patten's wife works at a Salem-based law office that has a relationship with Honda North and conveyed the VSD's goal of obtaining a vehicle for veterans' transportation. Through this networking, Patten was able to secure the donation of a Honda Odyssey minivan from the dealership.

Patten emphasizes the importance of garnering the support of local officials, as he did with Mayor Ted Bettencourt. The City of Peabody will cover the cost of insurance, fuel, and maintenance of the vehicle, which will be staffed by volunteer drivers. Veterans interested in utilizing this service should schedule their ride with the VSD a week in advance.

Travel trainer dances to demonstrate safety exercises

As Move-Safe Counselor at [Greater Lynn Senior Services](#), Sylvia Marshall helps seniors ride transit, providing [travel training](#) and organizing group expeditions via local bus or commuter rail. She also helps make sure they have the balance and strength needed to ride transit safely. As part of her falls prevention efforts, Marshall regularly visits the Lynn Senior Center and other locations to assist seniors in practicing key exercises recommended by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Always looking for ways to make safety fun, Marshall created a dance demonstrating key exercises and performed it for seniors earlier this winter. The dance highlights three key exercises: [Sit to Stand](#), [4-Stage Balance Test](#), and [Timed Up & Go](#).

Coming up in February

In February, two national webinars will highlight presenters from Massachusetts. On February 15, join Partners for Youth with Disabilities to hear about a recent initiative in which youth with disabilities in Michigan mentored Massachusetts youth on a transportation advocacy project. [Learn more and register](#) .

A February 21 [webinar](#) on connections between Complete Streets and mobility management will feature North Central Massachusetts. Hear from the [Montachusett Regional Planning Commission](#) and [Montachusett Opportunity Council](#) about how they are integrating mobility management and Complete Streets initiatives. The webinar is sponsored by the [National Center for Mobility Management](#) and the [National Complete Streets Coalition](#). [Learn more and register](#).

Research databases available for Massachusetts agencies

This article was reprinted from the [National RTAP eNews](#).

The National RTAP Resource Center has joined the Massachusetts Library System, and is now able to offer customers based in Massachusetts access to full-text research databases that include textbooks, journals, and business intelligence. Transit-related titles include Transportation Journal, Journal of Advanced Transportation, and more. For access to the databases, please contact info@nationalrtap.org .

Who is MassMobility?

For those of you who only know us through the newsletter, **MassMobility** is a state initiative based at [EOHHS](#) which also receives funding from MassDOT. We seek to improve mobility for seniors, people with disabilities, and others in all regions of Massachusetts by sharing information about existing services and supporting organizations in their efforts to fill transportation gaps. We provide presentations to human service agency staff to help them learn how to help consumers find transportation, and we also provide technical assistance to any organization looking to address transportation challenges. We welcome you to [contact us](#) any time if you have a question or idea for a project that would improve mobility for seniors or people with disabilities.

Follow us on Twitter

Are you on Twitter? If so, follow us @MassMobility for links to community transportation resources relevant to organizations and agencies here in Massachusetts. If you aren't on Twitter, you can still see our posts online at twitter.com/MassMobility/.

We want to know your stories

If you have suggestions for news items or topics to cover in future newsletters, please [contact us](#) or [submit a guest article](#). Comments, questions, and feedback are also welcome.

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